



**University of  
Zurich**<sup>UZH</sup>

**Zurich Open Repository and  
Archive**

University of Zurich  
University Library  
Strickhofstrasse 39  
CH-8057 Zurich  
[www.zora.uzh.ch](http://www.zora.uzh.ch)

---

Year: 2012

---

## **The Making of the Humanities (Book Review)**

Goeing, Anja-Silvia

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/668307>

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-132095>

Journal Article

Published Version

Originally published at:

Goeing, Anja-Silvia (2012). The Making of the Humanities (Book Review). *Renaissance Quarterly*, 65(3):871-873.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1086/668307>



---

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Making of the Humanities* by Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn

Review by: Anja-Silvia Goeing

Source: *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Fall 2012), pp. 871-873

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Renaissance Society of America

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/668307>

Accessed: 21-01-2017 00:29 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>



*Renaissance Society of America, The University of Chicago Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Renaissance Quarterly*

Rens Bod, Jaap Maat, and Thijs Weststeijn, eds. *The Making of the Humanities*.

Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010. 400 pp. €44.50. ISBN: 978-90-8964-269-1.

When we think of the humanities in early modern times we are usually thinking about school and academy syllabi that were built up on the specific tradition of European *Latinitas*. This was the central concern of the widely discussed 1986 book by Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*. Their central argument, that the humanities started with scholars like Peter Ramus, who unhinged humanist teaching from its moral foundations, is subsumed beneath an altogether different view of the beginning of the humanities in this collective volume, *The Making of the Humanities*. Writing about early modern humanities in this book is synonymous with writing about a bunch of disciplines that came into being much later. The authors treat the humanities as traditions of specific knowledge that are connected to politics and scholarly practices, of which teaching is not the pivotal one. Eighteen case studies describe correcting, streaming, gathering, transferring knowledge in fields preceding those that came to be called the humanities in the nineteenth century. Contributors take a comparative view in order to build contexts with other fields and discuss different methods and

formats. Protagonists include the polymath Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (ca. 1601–80), and the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–77). The strength of this book lies in the way it connects these well-known profiles to lesser-known figures, and in its discussion of those fields, including the visual arts, linguistics, and history, that had scarcely been defined among the *artes liberales* in the humanism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. As this book shows, the significance of these disciplines for the academy grew immensely in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The chapters examine the history of disciplines that today are regarded as separate and distinct. Starting with the gap that scholars of today feel between humanities and the sciences and notably leaving the social sciences out of the argument, the editors seem to have encouraged contributors to form pairs under the following section headings: “Visual Arts as Liberal Arts,” “Humanism and Heresy,” “Language and Poetics,” “Linguists and Logicians,” “Philology and Philosophy,” and “The History of History.” Each group connects two or three articles. Six essays make some of the most compelling contributions to current scholarship. Floris Cohen’s overview article examines the development of the discipline of music. Stemming from mathematics, music separated in the seventeenth century into the science of acoustics and the content-driven discipline of musicology, which became part of the humanities. Ingrid Rowland and Juliette Groenland show from two different angles, philosophy and teaching, that in the first half of the sixteenth century scholarly practices helped shape a worldview beyond specific fields of academic knowledge. Seen from this point of view, sixteenth-century practices seem remote from our modern notion of the disciplines. Már Jónsson traces a major thread of common European textual culture in the late seventeenth-century Danish and Norwegian academies. Arnas Magnæus (1663–1730), student of theology in Copenhagen, collected, transcribed, and edited medieval manuscripts of Icelandic sagas and histories. He introduced humanist traditions of accurate transcription into this field and stumbled over the compilation of textual variants. After his death, his collection of close to 3,000 manuscripts went to the University of Copenhagen. Thijs Weststeijn discusses Athanasius Kircher’s interpretation of Chinese script as symbols that reveal themselves, connecting the visual and the verbal. Finally, Wouter Hanegraaff identifies the work of Jacob Brucker (1696–1770) as one of the most influential philosophical studies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Brucker used a historical approach to separate Christian and classical philosophical thinking. With this he not only criticized sharply hybrid forms like Neoplatonism but also paved the way to modern philosophical thinking.

The purpose of this book is to answer two questions: first, the question of what — what kind of organizing principles did academic knowledge deploy in different early modern settings?; and second, the question of how — how did academic knowledge in Europe come to be what it is in modern times? The authors’ focus on the non-sciences is intended to fill a lack that the editors see when compared to the vast and existing literature written about the history of the sciences.

The book is therefore most valuable to academics studying the history of European academic knowledge.

ANJA-SILVIA GOEING

California Institute of Technology